



*it happened one night*

The  
Centennial  
of Night  
Football  
1892-1992

Mansfield University and Wyoming Seminary



The men on the line square off and face each other.

Bareheaded, with no more padding than a leather vest, their only goal is to make sure the quarter-back advances the ball.

The ball is hiked, the men on the line begin slugging each other in a bare-knuckled bloody battle to move forward.

In the gathering dusk, the crowd in the grandstands yell as they strain to see through the fog that swirls quietly in the dim light of a new invention - *electric lights*.



The date is  
September 28, 1892.

The schools are Mansfield State Normal and Wyoming Seminary.

The lights are  
General Electric.

Together they made history and paved the way for an American tradition - *night football*.





# The Idea

The revolutionary idea of a night football game started with a group of students who had played on Mansfield's first football team in 1891. Eager to showcase their new sport, they proposed to play a night game at the Great Mansfield Fair.

The fair was the region's major social event and featured such unique events as death-defying parachute drops from three balloons at over 2,000 feet.

But the talk of this year's fair was about something never before seen in Tioga County, a glimpse into the 20th century - the electric light!

Invented just 13 years earlier by Thomas Edison, this new wonder was brought to Mansfield by John L. Cummings and the General Electric Company.

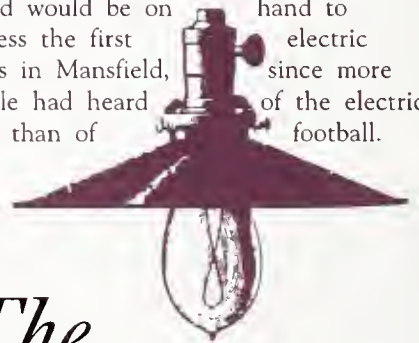
"John L. Cummings will be pleased to give all persons interested in Electric Lighting all the information possible on Isolated Plants and Central Stations. The General Electric Company has control of the very best patents, including the Edison and Thompson Huston Cail at the light plant on the fairgrounds."

*Mansfield Advertiser, Sept. 28, 1892.*



As early as Sept. 7 the Mansfield Advertiser reported "Normal School foot ball enthusiasts are endeavoring to arrange a game to be played by electric light with the eleven from Wyoming Seminary, near Scranton."

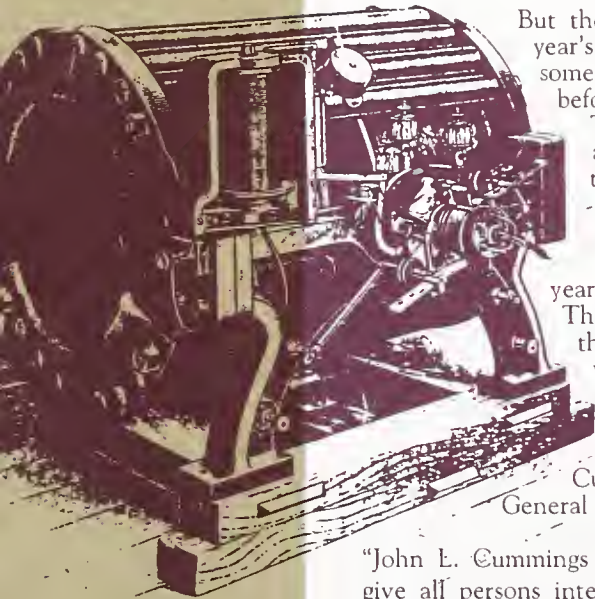
Professor S. E. Sprole, Mansfield's manager, predicted a larger than usual crowd would be on hand to witness the first electric lights in Mansfield, since more people had heard of the electric light than of football.



# The Lights

"The electric light dynamo which is to be used to illuminate the fair grounds is a Thompson-Huston machine of thirty light capacity. It weighs 4300 pounds, and the generator, containing miles of insulated copper wire, makes nearly a thousand revolutions a minute. The lights to be used are twenty lamps of 2000 candle power and five 64-candle incandescent lights. The power to operate the dynamo is to be furnished by Messrs. Day & Waters from their 20 horse engine. The plant is in charge of H. E. Varney, of Philadelphia, and J. L. Cummings of this boro."

*Mansfield Advertiser Sept. 28, 1892.*



GE's Thomson-Huston dynamo provided the brawn for that brainy idea, night football

## The Teams

The first night football game was only the fifth game Mansfield had ever played. The Red and Black posted a 3-1 record in its inaugural season in 1891. The match against Wyoming Seminary was the 1892 season opener.

Scheduling Wyoming Seminary was a bit of a stretch for Professor Sprole. "Sem" already boasted an eight-year football tradition and had finished 1891 as perhaps the best prep school football team in the nation with a 5-1 mark.

Nonetheless, Sprole was quite likely confident of a good showing. His team featured players such as Morton Jones, who went on to star at Lafayette, and James A. and James G. Dunsmore, who both later played for Penn State.

The star of Mansfield's 1892 squad was George Walbridge, who later captained Lafayette and was named a Walter Camp All-American in 1897. The speedy halfback would win \$5 by finishing first in the 100 yard dash at the fair the next day.

## The Equipment

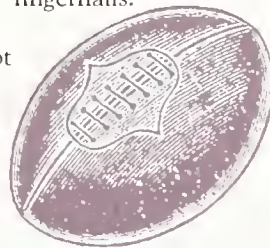
The boys of the first night game used practically no protective equipment. The only noticeable protection in team photos is padding sewn in the pants around the knees.

Helmets would not come into play for another 20 years. Players grew their hair extra long to protect their heads. At the end of the season they would have their locks shorn at the annual football banquet.

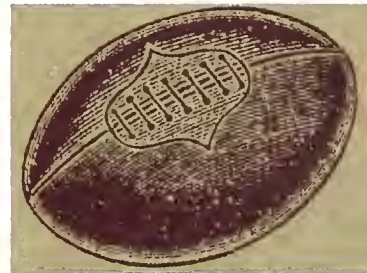
Wyoming Seminary wore white uniforms, reasoning they would reflect light more effectively. Mansfield sported new black uniforms. It cost \$40 to outfit the whole squad.

Some of the players wore snug fitting canvas jackets over their jerseys since tackling below the waist was not permitted. Others wore pants, or jackets of black horsehair. Many opponents tackled players wearing these jackets, and many lost their fingernails.

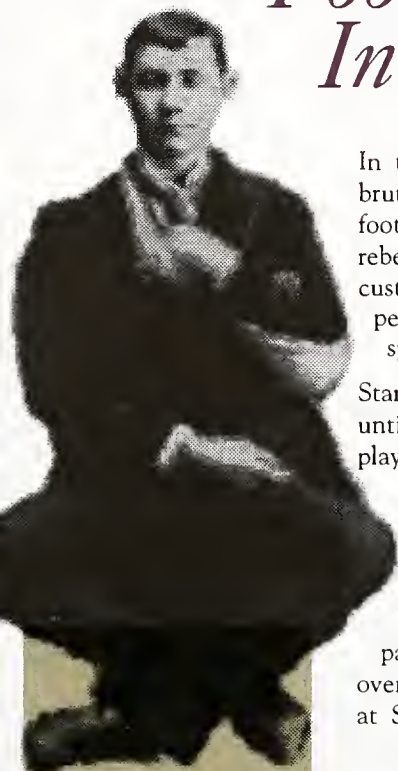
Numbers would not be part of uniforms until Washington and Jefferson wore them for the first time in the 1908.



The ball itself was much larger and rounder than today's football.



# Football In 1892



Football was brutal - which made getting dressed for post-game photos a real pain

In the 1890s, play was savage. In fact, brutality was one of the attractions of football in those days. Society was rebelling against the confining Victorian customs and increasing numbers of people were turning to this "killer sport."

Standard rules would not be established until 1894. The first night game was played by a combination of rugby and football rules. Slugging and kicking were commonplace tactics.

The playing field itself was any length agreed upon by the participants, but was almost always over 100 yards long. In 1892, the field at Smythe Park was at least 110 yards.

There were no 5-yard strip lines running across the field, no linesmen. The referee kept track of distance by dropping a handkerchief where he guessed the ball was last put into play. Players often engaged the referee in a discussion of the rules while teammates would slyly try to move the handkerchief. Teams were allowed three downs to gain five yards.

The game was divided into 45-minute halves. Once a game started, a player could not leave unless he actually was hurt, or at least pleaded injury. So whenever the captain wanted to put a fresh player into action he whispered to

a player to "get your arm hurt or something."

Arguments followed almost every decision the referee made. The whole team took part, so that half the time the officials scarcely knew who was captain. In addition, every player was privileged to argue as much as he pleased with any and every player of the opposition. The player skilled in forensics was a priceless asset.

There was no neutral zone between the two scrimmage lines, only an imaginary scrimmage line drawn through the center of the ball. Nearly all linemen lined up squarely against those who played the same positions on the opposing team. They stood upright and fought it out with each other tooth and nail, fist and feet. A player didn't stand much of a chance of making the line unless he was a good wrestler and fair boxer.

Instead of a kickoff to start the game, the center merely touched the ball to his toe, then tossed it back to a teammate who ran with it while the rest of the team gave him what interference it could.

The flying wedge was the play of the year. It worked like this: nine players withdrew about 20 yards from mid-field. At a signal they broke into lines and started simultaneously at full speed toward the ball.



By the time they arrived at the ball, they had worked up a stupendous mass momentum. The interference they gave for the runner was something wonderful to behold, and terrible to stop.

Players of one side were permitted to grab hold of their runners anywhere they could and pull, push or yank him along in any direction that would make the ball advance. Some runners had leather straps attached to their hips or shoulders to help their teammate get a good hold.\*

## The Game

The 1892 game, scheduled for 7:30 p.m., actually started at 6:45 p.m., perhaps to take advantage of the few remaining moments of twilight.

Wyoming Seminary reports say at least some of the lights were posted on a pole in the middle of the field, adding a hazard to the already perilous sport. Other accounts say lights were also draped along the front of the grandstand.

The lighting was minimal and the teams were often unaware of which squad had the ball. Anyone in a uniform was liable to be tackled. The playing surface, also the site of many other events at the fair, was full of holes,

butternuts, pebbles and "animal residue".

Mansfield won the toss and opened with a close "V". They gained 100 yards before being stopped. A few short gains were made through the center but they soon lost the ball to Wyoming who started in with a rush.

Right halfback T.C. Jones circled left end for 25 yards. Left halfback Jaynes also found a hole on the left side for 10 yards. But the Mansfield defense stiffened and held Seminary on downs.



Mansfield University, 1891-92



Wyoming Seminary, 1892

After this, neither team was able to move the ball consistently until, late in the half, Wyoming Seminary penetrated into Mansfield territory before losing the ball on downs at the 20 yard line. After three plays, Mansfield was unable to make a first down.

*\*(Portions of this account were written by the great John Heisman for "The Encyclopedia of Sports" by Frank G. Menke)*

At this point the referee, Dwight Smith, who played on Mansfield's 1891 team, deemed it "inconvenient to continue" because the limited lighting and foggy conditions made the dangerous game, well, too dangerous.

The game was called at the end of the first half and was followed by fireworks both on and off the field. Sem's team manager, J.H. Race, was the umpire and Mansfield's Smith the referee. Wyoming

accused the Normals of using ineligible players, and the officiating was controversial.

The world's first night football game ended bitterly in a 0-0 tie.

Before leaving Mansfield, Race submitted a challenge for a rematch. One hundred years later, Mansfield answered the challenge.

October 5, 1892

# Mansfield Advertiser

## The Challenge

To Prof. S.E. Sprole, Manager  
Mansfield S.N.S. Foot Ball  
Team: Since you claim that  
your team won that farcical  
exhibition of foot ball given  
at Mansfield last Wednesday  
evening, I hereby challenge  
your foot ball team to meet  
the Wyoming Seminary team  
at West Side Park,  
Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Oct. 15,  
1892, or on any other date  
prior that you may suggest.  
The referee and umpire to be  
competent men who have  
never had any connection  
with either school, and every  
member of each team to be  
a bona fide student of the  
school represented by such  
team.

We agree to pay the  
necessary traveling expenses  
and local entertainment of  
your team and their  
substitutes.

Respectfully,

J.H. Race, Manager



# The Challenge Accepted

To the Wyoming Seminary  
Foot Ball Team:

A century ago, your coach challenged the red-blooded sons of Mansfield to a rematch following the world's first night foot ball game played by our teams Sept. 28, 1892 at Smythe Park in Mansfield, PA.

We, the members of the Freshman and Sophomore Foot Ball Club of Mansfield University, hereby accept that challenge!

Our squad, stout-hearted stalwarts to the last man, will meet your varsity at 7:00 p.m., Monday, Sept. 28, 1992, at Smythe Park exactly 100 years after our first titanic tussle.

We agree to clear the field of the horse chestnuts that your team uncharitably claimed impeded their efforts in 1892. Your team and its loyal fans are also invited to enjoy the hospitality and attractions of Mansfield's "Fabulous 1890s Weekend" Sept. 25-28.

Together, Wyoming Seminary and Mansfield University will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first night foot

ball game played in the United States of America!

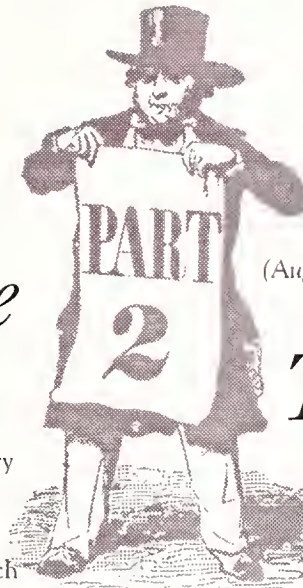
(August 2, 1992, area newspapers)

# The 1992 Game

Both schools wanted to celebrate their place in history by playing each other again on the centennial anniversary. Since NCAA Div. II did not allow MU's team to play Sem, MU formed a club team. The two teams will begin the game at 7 p.m. - 100 years to the hour after the 1892 game.

The evening's highlight will be a halftime re-creation of the 1892 game. Striving for historical accuracy, Alpha Chi Rho will use the rules and plays of the day. The uniforms and the ball are from the General Electric commercial that commemorates the 1892 game.

Thanks primarily to GE and Alpha Chi Rho, the show you will see will be historically accurate - right down to the pole in the middle of the field which the 1892 team used to light the world's first night football game. It was the first and last time a light pole was placed at mid-field.



# The Great Mansfield Fair

*In the 1890s, the county fair was the social event of the year, and the place where new products, inventions and ideas were tested.*

*The Mansfield Fair was no exception.*

Officially it was the Tioga County Agricultural, Mechanical and Industrial Fair.

It was administered by the Smythe Park Association, which was formed on Nov. 28, 1879 with capital stock of \$2,500.

The first fair was held on Oct. 1-3, 1879. Sixteen carloads of stock and equipment came from New York State and 5,000 people attended on Oct. 2.

The fair was held on the "Island," a five-acre plot owned by Dr. Henry G. Smythe and used as a picnic area by the community. The island was formed by a cove. During the summer everyone,

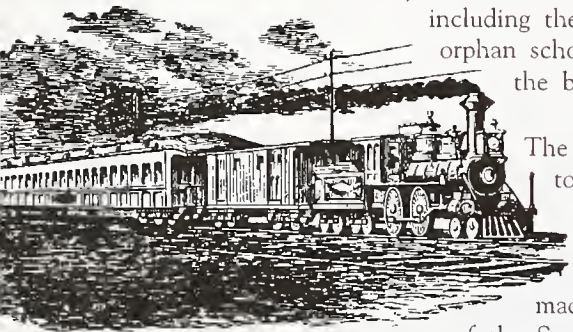
including the boys from the orphan school, worked to clear the brush and make lawns.

The new park was opened to the public for the July 4th celebration, 1879. Improvements continued to be made through the efforts of the Smythe Park association.

Many of the improvements came when the Association turned a disastrous flood of 1889 into an advantage. The river changed and filled the cove. They placed a creek underground, made a new entrance gate and terraced the bank in front of the cattle barns. . . .

Attendance by 1900 reached 20,000 on the big day, Thursday, with an average attendance of 40,000 per year for many years.

The railroad played a major role in the Mansfield Fair. It enlarged its facilities at the station and began as many as four excursion trains on Thursday; on other days they ran one special train. The excursions came from Morris Run, Blossburg, Arnot, the Cowanesque Valley, Corning and Elmira. These were in addition to the regular passenger freight and mail trains. Many people spent an entire day coming in by horse and wagon.





In addition to the usual rides, shows and exhibits of farm produce, there were baseball games and special attractions. . . .

The Mansfield Fair became known for its free attractions. Many of these were acts that during the winter season played the vaudeville circuit and special tour performances. Many came directly from New York City and Atlantic City. These included the top acrobats, The Five Troup, tight wire acts, Russian bear acts and others. Among the special free attractions were the hot air balloons, early aeroplane flights and the first ever night football game under electric lights.

The final fair was held Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 1956. Smythe Park became the property of the Mansfield Area School System. Its buildings had to be removed as the park was also a part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' flood control system and protection for the borough. The school board continues to respect the wishes of Dr. Henry G. Smythe, using the "Island" for wholesome recreation and as a public park.

*(This edited information is excerpted from "The Great Mansfield Fair" by Chester P. Bailey).*



Executive parking  
had yet to be  
invented in  
the 1890's





# *Mansfield In 1892*

The 1890s were a time of fabulous changes in America. While a few outlaws were still shooting up the West, automobiles were appearing on the east coast. It was a time of spectacular progress and widespread poverty. However, 1892 was termed a "prosperity year." Grover Cleveland was President. While they didn't experience the high

drama of the cities, small towns in America continued their march toward progress. Mansfield was no exception. The following is by County Historian Chester Bailey):

Founded in 1857, Mansfield Borough experienced a period of growth during the 1880s. The increase in train traffic, a successful annual Agricultural Fair, and the growth of the Mansfield State Normal School all contributed to Mansfield's growth.

All the best hats  
were likely to  
show up at the  
Mansfield Fair





The Borough Council opened the 1892 year with an ordinance that made it illegal to cross any bridge in the borough faster than a walk. It carried a \$5 fine. Building new and repairing old plank sidewalks were on the agenda. . . . A new bid for cleaning and lighting street lights was awarded at 85 cents per night. To solve the problem of available fuel oil which the borough furnished, a platform to hold a barrel of oil was placed in the borough building.

The borough council considered an ordinance to allow bicycles and tricycles to be ridden on the side walk by posting a \$200 bond. They requested the railroad company to slow trains at the Main St. crossing and set the wage for borough employees at \$1.50 per day for man and \$3 per day for man and horse. . . .

In 1892 the newly formed Board of Trade raised money to help bring in a glove factory. They also built a plant for the Paisley Shawl factory. A steam laundry was located on Elmira Street.

The Opera House was the center of community entertainment.



W. E. N. S. Girl's Dormitory, Mansfield, Pa.

Mansfield University's  
19th century wonder  
North Hall: Never since  
have so many bricks  
looked so fancy



# *The Fabulous 1890's Weekend*

The story behind the first annual Fabulous 1890s Weekend is as fascinating as the first night football game itself.

County historian Chester Bailey, while a student at Mansfield University in the mid-1930s, discovered accounts of the historic 1892 game. Bailey, who also worked as a reporter for the Advertiser, documented the event and had it placed in the Football Hall of Fame. He kept the event alive for nearly 40 years. In 1976, as chairman of the County Bicentennial Committee, Bailey had the game formally recognized. Mansfield University and Mansfield Borough jointly erected a plaque in Smythe Park commemorating the 1892 game.

In 1988, the MU PR staff discussed the idea of staging a re-creation of the 1892 game. With the support of President Rod Kelchner, the staff and Alpha Chi Rho, members produced the re-enactment, learning all the plays of this rough 19th century sport.

As the centennial of this historic event drew nearer, the PR staff met with the Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce with the idea of creating a whole weekend devoted to the 1890s. The Fabulous 1890s Weekend Committee was formed almost on the spot. As word spread of the plans to turn back the town 100 years, so did the enthusiasm.

In addition to the Chamber and university, the Southern Tioga School District, Mansfield High, Mansfield Borough, ministerium and numerous community and university organizations volunteered their help.

From the inception of the idea, the goal has been to create a historically accurate, family-oriented weekend celebrating the last and most colorful decade of the 19th century. All events culminate with the centennial game.

Plans call for the Fabulous 1890s Weekend to be held every year to celebrate life in the 1890s and America's First Night Football Game.



# The Jupenlaz Harness shop

One of Mansfield's thriving businesses of 1892 continues today; the leather business operated by the Jupenlaz family. William Hollands started the business in 1848. He moved into the present location, 8 North Main Street, in 1885 and sold it a year later to a Mr. Jaynes. Fred Jupenlaz bought the business in 1901. Ernest Jupenlaz started working for his uncle while he was in high school. After graduating in 1922 he entered the business full time.

Jupenlaz Harness Shop gained a reputation for excellence throughout the Twin Tiers. Harnesses for carriage and pleasure horses to the heaviest draft horses used in construction and in the woods for heavy timber business received the same expert care.

As the task for the horse changed, the Jupenlaz shop also changed. Shortly after the automobile came into the area, touring car owners discovered that Jupenlaz's could replace straps and even repair the necessary side curtains. Other leather products were introduced including luggage, ladies' pocket books and men's billfolds.

According to Ernest, the custom jobs increased more than anything else,

including children's pistol holsters that were distributed in Florida and equipment for Florida State University's circus. These included leather mouth pieces for hanging by the teeth, foot harnesses and shoulder straps, and belts with cups to support the pole for the performer.

Repair work was always a big item. No advertising was ever necessary, for word-of-mouth spread Jupenlaz's fine reputation.



Jupenlaz Harness Shop always had a display in the main building at the Mansfield Fair.

Ernest Jupenlaz still operates his shop in the original 1885 site. Stop in and see one of the last remaining leather workers in his shop which has come to be a living museum.

*The shop predates  
night football;  
the man brought it  
to the threshold of  
the 21st century*

## *Mansfield University Today*

Founded in 1857, Mansfield University today offers over 70 degree programs in a beautiful mountainous setting. The campus' 174 acres offer a panoramic view of the hills and farmlands and provide an excellent setting for educational and personal growth for its 3,000 full - and part-time students. The 190 faculty are committed to the profession of teaching. In addition, many have earned national and international respect in their fields of expertise.

Student faculty ratio is about 19:1.

All dorm rooms are wired for telephone, TVs, and limited access to the mainframe. The library, in addition to a computer lab, contains nearly one million books, recordings and reference items.

Mansfield University is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and has access to the resources of 13 sister institutions.

The curriculum includes 4-year baccalaureate programs in the liberal arts and professional studies, 2-year associate programs in respiratory therapy, radiological technology and master's degree programs.

## *Wyoming Seminary Today*

Wyoming Seminary College Preparatory School is recognized throughout the world for its demanding curriculum and superb teaching.

Nestled on 18 acres in the broad Wyoming Valley of Northeastern Pennsylvania, Sem is a complete school system beginning with a nursery and continuing through a secondary college preparatory program. Two campuses accommodate nearly 700 day and boarding students.

Founded in 1844 by Methodist leaders, Sem is one of the country's oldest coeducational independent schools.

The church's influence is subtly apparent in the moral and ethical values that characterize campus life, in the economic and cultural diversity of the student body and in the faculty's care and concern for its students. Wyoming Seminary's curriculum includes a rigorous college preparatory program with a larger-than-average required core as well as many creative interdisciplinary and team-taught elective courses. Students compete on a national level: 20 percent of 1992 seniors achieved National Merit Scholarship recognition. Six of those students were named National Merit Finalists.

## **The Fabulous 1890's Committee**

Chester Bailey  
Tom Grady  
Irene Litz  
Benjamin Nevin  
Jim Pratt  
Steve McCloskey  
Dennis Miller  
Ron Remy  
Don Wills  
William Waldman

**The Centennial of  
America's First Night  
Football Game and the  
Fabulous 1890s Weekend  
would not have been  
possible without the  
following sponsors:**

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The Los Angeles Raiders  
Mansfield Foundation Inc.  
Mansfield Borough  
MU President and  
Mrs. Rod C. Kelchner  
National Football League Properties, Inc.  
Southern Tioga School District  
The American Flint Glass Workers



The committee also expresses sincere thanks to the following businesses and organizations who contributed dollars and time to make the Fabulous 1890s Weekend a reality:

### **Mansfield Community Groups and Individuals**

Mansfield Borough  
Mansfield Water Authority  
Dunkin' Donuts  
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Corey Creek Golf Club  
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Mansfield Pennysaver  
Wellsboro Gazette  
Mansfield Kiwanis  
Mansfield Lions Club  
Mansfield Rotary  
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Tioga Communications & Electronics  
Cole's Pontiac & Buick  
Jim Burd's Chevrolet Oldsmobile  
Ralph's Ford  
Wilson Dodge  
Costy's Chrysler

### **Mansfield University**

Scott A. Miller  
Tucker Worthington  
Alpha Chi Rho

Tekeste Abraham  
The MU Mountie Marching Band  
MU Buildings & Grounds staff  
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Matt Regulski  
John Vitale  
Kenneth Ferron  
Howard Travis  
Karen Bogues  
Edith Gallagher

### **Other Groups And Individuals**

All-Sport Floodlighting, Inc.  
Marvin Antinnes, Wyoming Seminary  
John Shafer, Wyoming Seminary  
Marvin Schlenker  
Siobhan Mullen  
National Guard  
Army Corps of Engineers



